

# THE STATUS REPORT

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## On Behalf of Massachusetts' Unsung Heroines, MCSW Thanks You!

Thank you. You obviously heard our request for your assistance in identifying Unsung Heroines from every corner of the Commonwealth. Nominations have been pouring in to the MCSW office in anticipation of the recognition event planned at the State House on May 16. Each nomination contains one woman's personal story, including the reasons why her nominator chose to highlight her accomplishments and contributions. Although only one Unsung Heroine will be chosen from each city or town, each of the nominees is a portrait of selflessness and integrity.

The goal of the Unsung Heroine Initiative is to praise and honor amazing women for their dedication and commitment to improving the lives of others. By recognizing these deeds that usually go unnoticed and underappreciated, the Unsung Heroine Initiative strives to inspire other women in the Commonwealth to mirror the positive actions that benefit their communities and the state as a whole.

Now that the nomination deadline has closed, an independent Selection Committee, comprised of unbiased volunteers across the state has the daunting task of reviewing each nomination and choosing one woman from each city and town to be honored as their community's 2007 Unsung Heroine.

This is the MCSW's fourth year sponsoring the Unsung Heroine Initiative and each year it grows and improves. We are heartened by the ripple effect of awareness and good will that we see it spreading statewide. The Initiative has created awareness about the selfless work that amazing women perform "behind-the-scenes" on a daily basis. The initiative has spurred other women to action and gained recognition for the significant contributions that are being made by 52 percent of the state's population. And this year, cities such as Newton and Waltham have collaborated with the MCSW and will hold additional local ceremonies to honor ALL of the Unsung Heroine nominees from their respective cities.

We salute all the Massachusetts women who have been nominated as this year's Unsung Heroines - the mothers, daughters, wives, grandmothers, volunteers, advocates, and organizers. They are the "doers" who have a huge impact on the lives of their families, friends, communities and the Commonwealth. We also thank all those who took the time to nominate a 2007 Unsung Heroine, because this initiative would be impossible without your help. Stay tuned to learn more about the Unsung Heroines of 2007!

If you'd like to join us in celebrating this year's honorees, sponsorship opportunities are available along with advertising space in the Event's Program Book. See the full page ad in this month's issue on page 8 for further details or contact Paula Daddona, MCSW program manager, at 617-626-6520.



*A local kick-off of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Unsung Heroines took place at Waltham City Hall on Feb. 12. Pictured are, from left, front row, state Sen. Susan Fargo, Mayor Jeannette A. McCarthy; second row, Waltham police officer June Conway, Councilor at large Sarafina "Sally" Collura, MCSW Commissioner Greer Swiston, MCSW Program Manager Paula Daddona*

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## Executive Director Corner

Guest Column: By Commissioner Catherine Greene, Esq.,  
Chair, MCSW Unsung Heroine Initiative 2007

March is National Women's History Month. Its establishment in 1988 also marked the 150th anniversary of the women's rights movement and its immeasurable contributions to our Nation's promise of justice and equality for all. Those gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, in July of 1848 for the first Women's Rights Convention gave voice so powerful to women's aspirations for inclusion and empowerment that their vision continues to shape our world today.

For eighteen years we have used Women's History month as a springboard: to celebrate past milestones; to teach about today's on-going struggle; and to inspire younger generations to achieve. In an ideal world, we wouldn't need to celebrate Women's History or similar memorial months: women no longer making gender-based historic accomplishments. Also in an ideal world, the MCSW and the thousands of agencies, organizations and programs committed to carrying-on the efforts of our Seneca visionaries, wouldn't have anything left to accomplish. We'd have gone out of business long time ago with "Gone Napping" signs in our homes, our schools, our work, our health care facilities, our places of worship – everywhere 51.98% of the population (and growing), weren't treated equally as the other 48.02% (and shrinking).

Until our children are taught in non-March months about the modern Dark Ages when women only made \$0.74 for every dollar earned by male counterparts doing the same or comparable work, we must continue to use all vehicles available to educate, promote and support efforts advocating women's advancement.

Until we reach this ideal gender-parity when it comes to accessing education, jobs, housing, health care, democracy and criminal, social and economic justice, we are obligated to remind that our mothers, sisters and daughters continue to face fundamental threats to their lives, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

Until we reach this ideal, this is one war we must continue to fight.

On May 16, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women will honor its 2007 Unsung Heroines – one woman representing each of the Commonwealth's 351 cities and towns in its fourth year, the Unsung Heroine Awards Initiative is a widely anticipated crowd pleaser. The event's quick-fire success is not surprising. We all crave relief from lives chopped with conflict. Honoring and celebrating unsung heroines who don't make the news but make the difference is a nourishing authentic and humbling experience of common familiarity. Each of us is a better person for having crossed paths with unsung heroines along our journeys.

The Unsung Heroine Initiative pays tribute to the thousands of women throughout the Commonwealth whose unheralded acts of generosity are living testaments to the sacrifices, strides and strength of our foremothers' spirits. They are continuing what our ancestors started – their efforts not only promoting equality for today's women and girls, but also serving to teach and inspire future legacies to do the same.

Their names not apparent in tomorrows' history books, we all know who they are: the fabric of our society and the patchworks of our quilts.



## Commissioner Spotlight

**Greer Swiston, Treasurer of the MCSW**, is a software engineer by training. She graduated from MIT and has worked on projects such as the Space Flight Operations Center at NASA JPL, an image processing software package for a startup company, as well as the Y2K initiative at Fidelity and the MLDirect online trading project at Merrill Lynch. She was recently awarded the Outstanding Leader award by the Newton Girl Scouts. She currently serves as President of the Chinese Alumni of MIT; Chair of the Newton Republican Ward Committee; and serves on the Board for the Newton League of Women Voters and the Newton Community Access Cable. Formerly she was: President of the Boston Chapter of the Society of Women Engineers; an Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) mentor; and on the Executive Committee of the Greater Boston Chinese Cultural Association (GBCCA). She was the first Asian woman to run for state office in 2004 and is currently pursuing local office as an Alderman-at-Large in Newton.



*Greer Swiston*

- **How did you hear about the Commission?**

I was privileged to share a podium with then Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey at an event at Boston College. We both spoke about women being active in government and politics, a cause about which we apparently were both passionate. Not long after, I received a call from the Governor's office asking if I would be willing to serve as one of the 4 Governor appointees to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women.

- **What were your initial impressions?**

My initial impression was to be truly impressed by the caliber and dedication of the women around me. Though their views about women in the state were different, all the women on the Commission clearly had a passion to give the female perspective the same influence over government laws and policies as the male perspective. With the Legislature overwhelmingly dominated by males when the population was over 50% female, our work at the Commission seemed to be cut out for us.

- **You were recently elected Treasurer of the Commission; what do you hope to accomplish?**

The MCSW has accomplished so much since its inception in 1998. We've reached a couple of critical milestones and I hope to solidify the current infrastructure within the Commission to take us to the next level. The Commission has played a role in MassGAP, creating the Massachusetts Women's Resource and Referral Network and brought awareness of the great things women do all around the State through their annual Unsung Heroine's award, but until women are more evenly represented in our leadership in Massachusetts, whether it be in Government or in Business, the Commission has a purpose and a mission to remind everyone about how 51% of the people here are affected by our laws, policies and services. I can only hope that my contributions would bring us that much closer to our goals.

## Commission Corner

### *MCSW Public Hearing Held at the Urban League in Roxbury*

Over thirty women gathered on February 28<sup>th</sup> at the Urban League in Roxbury to attend a public hearing sponsored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and the Massachusetts Coalition for Women's Wage Equality. The hearing was an opportunity for Boston area residents to offer testimony and voice their concerns about women's issues to the MCSW.

The hearing commenced with an enthusiastic welcome from several women leaders and legislators, including Evelyn Murphy, former lieutenant governor and author of the book *Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men and What to do About It*, Senator Dianne Wilkerson, Representative Gloria Fox, and Marie Turley, Executive Director of the Boston's Women's Commission. All women spoke of the importance of addressing wage disparities

and challenging the twenty-three-cent gender wage gap that exists today in Massachusetts.

Several women testified to the MCSW about the concerns and issues they face, including difficulty in accessing child care, the need for social services and programs to help women recover from drug and alcohol addiction, and workplace discrimination.

Jennease Hyatt, Prevention Program Coordinator for the AIDS Action Committee, testified about several issues including middle class women who are at risk for HIV/AIDS are being ignored and the desperate need for additional, comprehensive services for women in detox. Ms. Hyatt stated "when a woman enters into detox, more often than not, getting clean from her drug of choice is her first, but certainly not her only need. Often she also has to deal with stabilizing housing, legal matters, and finding employment. Comprehensive services are needed so that issues that will impact the success of getting and staying clean can be addressed."

The MCSW thanks all hearing participants and will bring the issues raised to state policymakers and legislators so they can decide how they can best serve and address women of the Commonwealth.



*Jennease Hyatt Testifies*



*Pictured at left, back row left to right, MCSW Commissioners Ruth Bramson, Greer Swiston, Susana Segat, Donna Finneran, Chair Elizabeth Houlihan & Gloria Coney.*

*Seated left to right: MCSW Commissioners Cathy Greene, Esq., Lianne Cook, Linda Cavaoli, Vice-Chair Marianne Fleckner & Kathy Casavant.*



## Legislative Corner

### *MCSW Endorses 4 Pieces of Legislation*

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is pleased to announce its first endorsements of the 2007-2008 legislative session: *An Act to Authorize a Study of the State's Human Resources Division Job Classification System*, *An Act to Define Comparable Work*, *An Act to Create a Bristol County Commission on Women* and *An Act Establishing the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission*.

***An Act to Authorize a Study of the State's Human Resources Division Job Classification***, filed by Senator Harriette Chandler and Representative Alice Wolf, would require the state's human resources division to establish a job analysis study of state employees of the executive branch to update the current job classification system and review class titles, job specifications, organizational relationships and job qualifications to insure that employee compensation, pensions, and benefits are free from gender and racial bias. It would also establish a Workforce Advisory Council of experts to assist the human resources division with this work. The MCSW worked closely with the legislative sponsors to develop the bill, which addresses the Commission's taking on advancing Massachusetts women to wage equality as a key priority

***An Act to Define Comparable Work***, filed by Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representative Alice Wolf, would define comparable work as "solely based on whether the two positions entail comparable skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions between employees of the opposite sex." Currently Massachusetts General Laws prohibits employers from paying male and female employee's different wages "for work of like or comparable character or work on like or comparable operations." However, the law does not define "comparable work." The Massachusetts Supreme Court has addressed "comparable work" by basing the analysis on "important common characteristics" between jobs; however, it has yet to provide guidance on which characteristics should be taken into account.

***Act to Create a Bristol County Commission on Women***, filed by Senator Joan Menard and Representative Patricia Haddad, would establish the state's 12<sup>th</sup> women's commission.

***An Act Establishing the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission***, filed by Senator Michael Knapik and Representative John Lepper, would establish a commission of experts to assess the challenges and unique needs associated with grandparents raising grandchildren and kinship care providers raising their related children. The MCSW first became involved with kinship care after receiving related testimony at a public hearing.

### *An Act Establishing a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission*

A distraught grandmother who shared the challenges and barriers she faced raising her grandchildren had a profound impact on Commissioners at a public hearing in Danvers in 2004. This heartfelt personal testimony, combined with several Commissioners' personal experiences with the issue, prompted the MCSW's Legislative and Public Policy Committee to examine the issue of kinship care. They began researching legislation and programs aimed at assisting kinship care providers.

After meeting with Representative John Lepper, an expert in kinship care issues and a grandfather who has raised his grandchildren, the Legislative and Public Policy Committee concluded that a significant number of organizations and groups exist to help kinship care providers; however, a unified voice advocating for the advancement of current kinship care legislation, including *An Act Establishing a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission*, which the Commission has endorsed for the 2007-2008 legislative session, did not exist.

Responding to this need, the MCSW convened a group of kinship care service providers, legislators, grandparents, and legal experts on February 12 to discuss how to best support and advance legislation related to kinship care. Included in the meeting were Commissioners Linda Cavaoli and Lianne Cook, Senator Michael Knapik's office, Catholic Charities' Grandparents As Parents Program in Lowell, Diane Hubbard, grandmother and kinship care activist, Representative Lepper, and representatives from the University of Massachusetts Boston Gerontology Institute.

Continued on next page

Continued from page 5 *An Act Establishing a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission*

The group has committed to organizing advocacy efforts, reaching out to policymakers and stakeholders, attending and testifying at public hearings, and supporting *An Act Establishing a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission* (GRGCC), which would establish a commission of experts to assess the challenges and unique needs associated with grandparents raising grandchildren and kinship care providers raising their related children. The GRGCC would serve as a liaison between grandparents and kinship care providers and organizations and agencies to foster relationships and ensure that caregivers have access to the services and assistance they need to raise and care for their children in their care. The GRGCC would also evaluate the effectiveness of state agencies in assisting grandparents and kinship care providers and advise the state as to how to best assist these unique families.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the group's efforts to advance kinship care legislation and support services, please contact Jill Ashton, Outreach Coordinator, at 617-626-6525.

## Other Noteworthy News:

### *Celebrate MassGAP and Moving Women Ahead on March 13th with Governor Patrick!*

To celebrate months of hard work by hundreds of volunteers, over 40 participating organizations, sponsors, the over 600 applicants and ultimately moving women ahead, the MassGAP Steering Committee will hold a Celebration on Tuesday March 13, from 6-8 p.m. at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel, Boston. Special guests will include Governor Deval Patrick and the senior women of his new administration.

To date nine women have been appointed as secretaries of executive departments and to other senior-level positions in the Patrick administration and MassGAP continues to work to ensure that more women are named at the agency head and under-secretary level in the coming months. This event holds special significance as it is being held as part of the celebration of National Women's History Month. Through MassGAP, Massachusetts women are truly making history.

The Massachusetts Governor's Appointments Project (MassGAP 2006) is a bi-partisan collaboration of women's groups whose purpose is to increase the number of women appointed by the new governor to senior-level cabinet positions, agency heads and selected authorities and commissions in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus (MWPC) is the Lead Sponsor of this collaboration. The MCSW is a participating organization and has a seat on the Steering Committee.

The initiative came into being when charter members bemoaned the fact that in 2002 women held approximately 30% of the top high-level appointed positions in the Commonwealth, although they made up 52% of the population. To rectify this inequity, more than 25 women's organizations banded together to form the bi-partisan MassGAP Project for the purpose of increasing the number of women in high-ranking appointed positions in Massachusetts and achieving fairer representation of women. MassGAP sought to eliminate the difficulty that state executives say they experienced whenever they tried to find qualified women for high-ranking positions. MassGAP did this through providing names and resumes of qualified women for top appointments. Subsequently, between January 2002 and July 2004, 42% of the new gubernatorial appointments made by Governor Mitt Romney were women. Massachusetts was widely recognized for that achievement and MassGAP was given credit for it. In a survey by the State University of New York (SUNY), Massachusetts was ranked first in the nation in the percentage of women holding top state positions. As the Boston Globe noted at that time, "Women fill 10 of 20 top positions in Governor Mitt Romney's administration, making the Commonwealth one of five states that come close to matching the percentage of top women appointees to the proportion of women in the overall population."

MassGAP 2006 seeks to have an even greater impact. According to the analysis of the 2002-2004 data by the UMass Boston's Center for Women and Politics and Public Policy, the top level appointments in Massachusetts state government remain at approximately 31% including new, holdover and non-gubernatorial appointments.

March 13 promises to be a stellar celebration – please plan to join us. You can register online at [www.massgap.org](http://www.massgap.org). Tickets are \$60, with a government employee rate of \$45. Sponsorship opportunities are also available at the web site.

## Other Noteworthy News Continued:

### *Women's Health Disparities Topic of International Women's Day Breakfast Held March 8*

Creating Equality in Women's Health was the theme of the March 8 annual International Women's Day Breakfast which was held at the Linda K. Paresky Conference Center in Simmons College in Boston. More than 100 people attended.

Featured speakers included: Ayesha Chatterjee, Our Bodies Ourselves, Dr. Nancy Norman, Boston Health Commission, Dr. Linda Piwowarczyk, Center for Refugee and Human Rights, Laurie Robinson, Office of Women's Health, U.S. DHHS and Susan Sered, Center for Health and Human Rights. The program highlighted local and global issues relating to women's health disparities and organizers hope the dialogue on possible solutions will continue.

International Women's Day is celebrated annually to honor women's achievements and to recommit to fighting continued injustices. The day showcases the international connections among women as well as offers opportunities to discuss strategies for working together more effectively.

### *Brockton Family & Community Resources Walk for Victim's Safety to be Held April 28 (Rain or Shine)*

The 5k walk thru D.W. Field's park in Brockton is co-sponsored by Brockton Family & Community Resources (BFCR), Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center and "CHANGE THE WORLD?" students from Stonehill College. Money raised will support the Victim Service Programs at BFCR.

In 2006 BFCR provided services to more than 4500 victims of trauma, including victims of domestic violence, community violence, drunk/drugged driving crimes as well as survivors of victims of homicide and terrorism.

BFCR provides a continuum of free, confidential services to child, adolescent and adult trauma victim/survivors in 45 cities and towns. Services include: SafePlan Legal Advocacy Project; Supervised Visitation Centers; Crisis Intervention/Hot Line Services; Emergency Shelter Community Based "Safe Bed" Program; Cape Verdean/ Portuguese Project; Child Witness to Violence Program; Group and Individual Supportive Counseling; Homicide bereavement supportive counseling and advocacy; Mental Health Treatment; Substance abuse services for Victims of domestic violence; Civilian Police Advocates; DSS Family Based Services; Responsible Fatherhood Program; Community Outreach, Education and Training; and Volunteer/Intern Program.

Walkers are needed and **It's More Fun If You Walk As A Team!** Forming a Walk Team is easy! It only takes 3 people and BFCR staff will help you every step of the way. The Walk for Victim's Safety is all about a community saying "NO" to violence and about supporting each other. Form a team of co-workers, neighbors, family and friends and do the Walk together.

Volunteers are also needed as The Walk for Victim's Safety 2007 will take more than 50 volunteers to ensure a fun, safe event. Please help us by volunteering to help with pre-walk details, the day of with crowd control, children's activities, set-up, etc.

If you would like to walk and need more information, a pledge form or would like to volunteer to help with the walk please call the Walk Office at (508) 583-6498.

### *SAVE THE DATE!!!*

*For the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance's (MOVA)*

*Annual Victim Rights Conference*

*April 26th, 2007 at the Massachusetts State House*

*For more information visit [www.mass.gov/mova](http://www.mass.gov/mova)*

## *The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Fourth Annual 2007 Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts*

**Wednesday, May 16, 2007**

1:00 pm ~ 4:00 pm

Massachusetts State House, Boston MA

*They don't make the news...  
they make the difference.*



### ☐ **\$15,000 HERO:**

"JUST DESSERTS" RECEPTION SPONSOR

- Prime promotion included in all collateral and media;
- Full page 4 color ad & logo on front cover of program book;
- Your logo and link to your Web site posted on MCSW's Web site;
- Your logo and name on all on-site event signage.

### ☐ **\$10,000 CHAMPION:**

- Prime promotion included in all collateral and media;
- Full page 4 color ad & logo on front cover of program book;
- Your logo and link to your Web site posted on MCSW's Web site;
- Your logo and name on all on-site event signage.

### ☐ **\$5,000 ROLE MODEL:**

- Inclusion in all collateral and media;
- Full page black & white prime location ad on front cover of program book;
- Your logo and link to your Web site posted on MCSW's Web site;
- Your logo and name on all on-site event signage.

### ☐ **\$2,500 PARTNER:**

- Inclusion in all collateral and media;
- Full page black & white ad in program book;
- Your logo & link to your Web site posted on MCSW's Web site;
- Your logo and name on all on-site event signage.

### ☐ **\$1,000 ADVOCATE:**

- Inclusion in all collateral and media;
- Full page black & white ad in program book;
- Your logo and link to your Web site posted on MCSW's Web site.

### ☐ **\$750 SUPPORTER:**

- Full page black & white ad in the program book.

### ☐ **\$375 MENTOR:**

- 1/2 page black & white ad in the program book.

### ☐ **\$200 HELPING HAND:**

- 1/4 page black & white ad in the program book

### ☐ **\$100 FRIEND:**

- 1/8 page black & white ad in the program book.

### ☐ **OTHER – Please specify**

**Program book artwork is due NO LATER THAN APRIL 18TH. All ads should be submitted in a high resolution format and e-mailed to [Paula.Daddona@state.ma.us](mailto:Paula.Daddona@state.ma.us).**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Please return this form along with a check, made payable to the "MCSW" to the address below.

Or pay via credit card online at [www.mass.gov/women](http://www.mass.gov/women) (Be sure to mail or fax this completed form to us!)

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. MCSW is a 509 (a)(1), not-for-profit organization.

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## Upcoming Noteworthy Events & Happenings

**March 13, 7:45 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. 2007 MA Health Care Summit Controlling the Rising Costs of Health Care**

To be held at the Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center, Marlborough, MA

**March 24, 8:00 AM - 2:30 PM The Money Conference for Women**

To be held at WNEC - Springfield, MA. To register, go to [www.themoneyconference.com](http://www.themoneyconference.com)

**March 28, 5:30 – 7 p.m. Plymouth County Public Hearing on Women's Issues**

Contact the MCSW office @ (617) 626-6520 for more information or to RSVP.

**End of March, beginning of April – the 2007 Community Unsung Heroines will be notified! A special thank you to all those who submitted nominations.**

**SAVE THE DATE!! April 23rd, Equal Pay Day!**

Featuring Keynote Speaker, Evelyn Murphy, former Massachusetts Lt. Governor and author of *Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid like Men and What to do About it*. To be held at the MA State House, Great Hall

**Saturday April 28, Walk for Victim's Safety**

To be held at Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center, 235 Pearl St., Brockton, MA. Walkers & volunteers are needed! To RSVP, or for more information, call the Walk Office (508) 583-6498.

For a complete listing of events please visit [www.mass.gov/women/upcoming.htm](http://www.mass.gov/women/upcoming.htm)

### Commission Officers & Members

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**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**

**VISIT US AT:**

**[WWW.MASS.GOV/WOMEN](http://WWW.MASS.GOV/WOMEN)**

**Do you have questions or comments about this newsletter? If so, please contact [Paula.Daddona@state.ma.us](mailto:Paula.Daddona@state.ma.us)**